

**REHABILITATION OF THE SUROOR
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
UNDER THE ECONOMIC SUPPORT FUND
HUSSEINIYA, IRAQ**

SUSTAINMENT ASSESSMENT

**SIGIR PA-08-135
APRIL 7, 2009**

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SIGIR

Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction

April 7, 2009

Rehabilitation of the Suroor Elementary School

What SIGIR Found

On 10 November 2008, SIGIR performed an on-site assessment at the Suroor Elementary School. The total cost of this firm-fixed-price construction contract was \$245,535 and was awarded to a local contractor with Gulf Region Central providing oversight. Also, the Government of Iraq funded a separate contract for plumbing repair work.

It was not possible to conduct a complete review of all work because security conditions did not allow for an in-depth site inspection. The inspection team was limited to 30 minutes on site, access to the roof was limited, and several rooms were locked. Therefore, SIGIR performed an expedited assessment.

The construction appeared to be adequate and satisfy the contract requirements. The SIGIR site visit identified potential issues with the delivery and installation of evaporative coolers and blackboards; specifically, SIGIR observed none of the four contract-required evaporative coolers, and the contractor provided blackboards were of such poor quality that the school refuses to use them. GRD subsequently provided SIGIR a photograph of the four evaporative coolers delivered to the school. In addition, GRD stated that "in October 2008, at the request of a government official, the school principal released three coolers on loan to other schools." Further, according to GRD, the school recently received 12 new whiteboards. The school maintenance staff plans to "put all blackboards in storage and install the new whiteboards in the classrooms because most Iraqi schools are now using whiteboards."

SIGIR also identified unsafe electrical wiring and outlets; however, the electrical wiring and outlets appeared to have been tampered with subsequent to the work performed by the contractor.

Although the contractor's work appeared to be adequate, SIGIR's site visit revealed significant problems caused by overcrowding, a lack of routine maintenance, and poor plumbing repair work. For example, the septic tank was not being emptied, and the capacity was not sufficient. A trench was dug to allow discharge, which provided relief, but the discharge released large quantities of untreated sewage, leaving the school and surrounding areas unsafe and unsanitary. A make-shift levee was constructed to help school children walk through areas with standing water and sewage.

The school relies on the national grid for its primary power; however, the national grid is unreliable and provides only about five hours of electricity daily. The contract did not include the purchase of generators to aid with the electrical shortfall.



Summary of Report: PA-08-135

Why SIGIR Did This Study

SIGIR is assessing projects funded under the Economic Support Fund. SIGIR conducted this assessment to determine if the project was at full capability or capacity when accepted by the U.S. government, when transferred to Iraqi operators, and during the site inspection on 10 November 2008.

The overall objective of the project was to rehabilitate the Suroor Elementary School, which was in a state of disrepair. This rehabilitation project was designed to benefit the students and teachers at the school and included the design and construction of all necessary electrical, plumbing, and architectural work needed to fully restore the school.

What SIGIR Recommends

The draft report originally contained recommendations to determine the status of the evaporative coolers and quality of the blackboards provided and installed by the contractor. Comments from the Commanding General, Gulf Region Division (GRD), stated that, in response to the draft report's recommendations, GRD representatives visited the school. GRD confirmed that a Government of Iraq representative loaned three evaporative coolers to other schools in October 2008. In addition, 12 new whiteboards were recently delivered to the school to replace the previously installed low-quality blackboards.

SIGIR concurred with the actions taken to resolve the issues identified. Consequently, SIGIR eliminated the two previous recommendations. Therefore, this report does not contain any further recommendations for corrective action.

SIGIR modified the draft report as appropriate to include the additional information and clarifying comments provided by GRD.

For more information, contact SIGIR Public Affairs at (703) 428-1100 or PublicAffairs@sigir.mil



SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR IRAQ RECONSTRUCTION

April 7, 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR COMMANDING GENERAL, UNITED STATES CENTRAL
COMMAND
COMMANDING GENERAL, MULTI-NATIONAL FORCE-
IRAQ
COMMANDING GENERAL, GULF REGION DIVISION,
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
COMMANDING GENERAL, JOINT CONTRACTING
COMMAND-IRAQ/AFGHANISTAN
DIRECTOR, IRAQ TRANSITION ASSISTANCE OFFICE

SUBJECT: Report on Sustainment Assessment of the Rehabilitation of the Suroor
Elementary School, Husseinia, Iraq (SIGIR Report Number PA-08-135)

We are providing this report for your information and use. It addresses the current status of the rehabilitation of the Suroor Elementary School, Husseinia, Iraq. The assessment was made to determine whether the project was operating at the capacity stated in the original contract.

We received comments on a draft of this report from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Gulf Region Division which addressed the issues raised in the report and recommendations made. The planned actions are responsive and addressed the issues we identified. As a result, comments to this final report are not required.

We appreciate the courtesies extended to our staff. If you have any questions please contact Mr. Brian Flynn via e-mail at brian.flynn@iraq.centcom.mil or at DSN 318-239-2485. For public affairs queries concerning this report, please contact SIGIR Public Affairs at publicaffairs@sigir.mil or at 703-428-1100.

Stuart W. Bowen, Jr.
Inspector General

Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction

SIGIR PA-08-135

April 7, 2009

Rehabilitation of the Suroor Elementary School Under the Economic Support Fund Husseiniya, Iraq

Synopsis

Introduction. The Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction is assessing projects funded under the Economic Support Fund to provide real-time information on relief and reconstruction to interested parties to enable appropriate action, when warranted. Sustainability assessments determine the current condition of completed projects subsequent to their transition to the Government of Iraq and whether the projects are likely to remain operational.

Project Assessment Objective. The objective of this project assessment was to determine whether the project was operating at the capacity stated in the original contract. To accomplish the objective, the assessment team determined whether the project was at full capability or capacity when accepted by the U.S. government, when transferred to Iraqi operators, and during the site inspection on 10 November 2008. SIGIR conducted this limited scope assessment in accordance with the Quality Standards for Inspections issued by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency. The assessment team comprised two engineers/inspectors and one auditor/inspector.

Project Objective. The overall objective of the project was to rehabilitate the Suroor Elementary School, which was in a state of disrepair. This renovation project was designed to benefit the students and teachers at the school and included the design and construction of all necessary electrical, plumbing, and architectural work necessary to fully restore the school.

Conclusions. The original objective of this project was to renovate the school in order to benefit the school's students and teachers. This school was in a state of major disrepair from years of neglect and failure to maintain adequate upkeep. The successful completion of this project would provide students in the neighborhood with a safe and suitable classroom environment.

On 21 January 2008, the Suroor Elementary School was accepted by the U.S. government and transferred to the Government of Iraq. On that same day, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) conducted a final inspection of the facility by commenting "Y" (yes) or "N" (no) in a column on the contract's bill of quantities and taking four photographs of the contractor's work. According to the final inspection report, USACE found no deficiencies with the contractor's work. The school was open and operating on that day, which USACE documented in a final inspection photograph.

During the site visit, SIGIR observed the school during the second of three daily shifts of approximately 500 students. According to the school's headmaster, this school educates approximately 1,500 students each day, which requires operating the school facility for three shifts of 500 different students for three hours per day.

The construction appeared to be adequate and to satisfy the contract requirements. The SIGIR site visit identified potential issues with the delivery and installation of evaporative coolers and blackboards; specifically, SIGIR observed none of the four contract-required evaporative coolers and the contractor-provided blackboards were of such poor quality that chalk does not adhere to them and the school refuses to use them. After advising the USACE Gulf Region Division (GRD) of these issues, GRD representatives visited the school to determine the status of the evaporative coolers and blackboards. GRD subsequently provided SIGIR a photograph of the four evaporative coolers delivered to the Suroor Elementary School. In addition, GRD stated that “in October 2008, at the request of a government official, the school principal released three coolers on loan to other schools.” This still leaves one evaporative cooler unit unaccounted for; however, at the time of the site visit, SIGIR was unable to inspect several rooms because they were locked and access to the roof was denied. Therefore, SIGIR cannot definitively state whether or not a single evaporative cooler unit was still at the school.

Further, according to GRD, the school recently received 12 new whiteboards. The school maintenance staff plans to “put all blackboards in storage and install the new whiteboards in the classrooms because most Iraqi schools are now using whiteboards.”

SIGIR also identified unsafe electrical wiring and outlets; however, it appeared that the electrical wiring and outlets were tampered with subsequent to the work performed by the contractor.

During this project, the Statement of Work was revised due to a school site visit by USACE Gulf Region Central (GRC) to verify existing conditions. One significant revision was the deletion of plumbing work. GRC was informed by school officials that the Government of Iraq awarded a separate contract for plumbing work to a local contractor that was already performing plumbing repairs. Therefore, GRC deleted the plumbing requirements from the contract. The Statement of Work appeared to be adequately developed and detailed to address the needs of the facility with one exception — permanent power. The school is completely dependent upon permanent power from the national grid to operate the lights, ceiling fans, and air conditioner. Since the power from the national grid is unreliable and susceptible to surges, the need for generator power should be addressed to allow for an environment conducive to education.

Although the contractor’s work appeared to be adequate, SIGIR’s site visit revealed significant problems caused by overcrowding, a lack of routine maintenance, and poor plumbing repair work. According to the headmaster, approximately 500 students per shift are being taught in 10 classrooms (averaging 50 students per classroom). The contract did not address furniture for the classrooms; therefore, some children had to sit on the floor. The lack of routine maintenance, especially in the bathrooms, was evident during the site visit. In addition, according to the headmaster, no one was responsible for emptying the septic tank; therefore, once it filled to capacity, no additional waste could enter. The capacity of the sanitary sewer septic system is not large enough for the size of the school. A trench was dug to allow discharge out of the full septic tank. Although this provided relief for the full septic tank, the discharge released large quantities of untreated sewage into areas bordering the school. As a result, the properties adjacent to the school grounds are unsafe and unsanitary. SIGIR observed standing water, sewage, and trash surrounding the school. Standing water and sewage can lead to diseases, such as cholera. A make-shift levee was constructed to help school children walk through areas with standing water and sewage.

SIGIR's assessment identified no significant deficiencies with the contractor's work under the revised Statement of Work. The significant problems associated with classroom overcrowding, a lack of routine maintenance, and poor plumbing repair work were not part of the scope of SIGIR's assessment. However, SIGIR would be remiss by not including these critical issues in this assessment. These problems need to be addressed in order to sustain full-capacity operations of this facility over the long term.

Recommendations. The draft report originally contained recommendations to determine the status of the evaporative coolers and quality of the contractor provided and installed blackboards. Subsequent to the issuance of the draft report, GRD provided additional clarifying documentation, which addressed the previous recommendations. Therefore, this report does not contain any further recommendations for corrective actions.

Management Comments. SIGIR received comments on the draft of this report from the Commanding General, GRD, concurring with its two recommendations. GRD representatives visited the school to determine the status of the missing evaporative coolers and the quality of the blackboards provided and installed by the contractor.. GRD confirmed that a Government of Iraq representative loaned three evaporative coolers to other schools in October 2008. In addition, 12 new whiteboards were recently delivered to the school to replace the previously installed low-quality blackboards.

Evaluation of Management Comments. SIGIR concurred with the actions taken to resolve the issues of missing evaporative coolers and poor quality blackboards. Consequently, SIGIR eliminated the two previous recommendations.

SIGIR modified the draft report as appropriate to include additional information and clarifying comments received from GRD.

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Introduction

Objective of the Project Assessment

The Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR) is assessing projects funded under the Economic Support Fund (ESF) Program to provide real-time relief and reconstruction information to interested parties to enable appropriate action, when warranted. The objective of this project assessment was to determine whether the project was operating at the capacity stated in the original contract. To accomplish the objective, the assessment team determined whether the project was at full capability or capacity when accepted by the U.S. government, when transferred to Iraqi operators, and during the site visit on 10 November 2008.

Economic Support Fund Program

Now totaling more than \$3.5 billion, the U.S. government's ESF program is a bilateral economic assistance fund used to promote foreign policy objectives in support of U.S. allies and countries in democratic transition. Programs supported by the ESF have emerged as significant components of the U.S. strategy in Iraq. ESF appropriations have been allocated to programs supporting Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Iraq. PRTs work with Iraqi-led Provincial Reconstruction Development Councils to identify and execute priority projects that strengthen the ability of provincial governments to deliver essential services and key development projects to their communities. The PRT's coordinate with local and provincial governments to match ESF programs with local needs.

For school children in the rural areas surrounding Baghdad, receiving an education has become a difficult and dangerous prospect in recent years. Teachers and staff fled fighting and in some cases the schools themselves were destroyed and looted by insurgents. As recent as early 2007, many villages were still controlled by al-Qaeda terrorists who kept children, especially females, from attending school. In 2006, the Ministry of Education (MOE) ordered the teachers out of the rural areas because of the deteriorated and dangerous security situation.

As security conditions improved in 2007, the MOE ordered teachers to return to their rural schools. The schools that the teachers and students returned to, in many cases, were either destroyed, unsafe, unsanitary, or lacked basic utilities, such as electricity, water, and sewer. Once security stabilized, the PRTs started developing school reconstruction and renovation projects using multiple funding mechanisms to increase learning opportunities for Iraqi children.

Pre-Site Assessment Background

Contract, Costs and Payments

The Suroor Elementary School Rehabilitation project was initiated under Contract W917BG-07-C-0118, dated 27 August 2007, a firm-fixed-price construction contract in the amount of \$245,535. The contract was between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Gulf Region Central (GRC) and a local contractor.

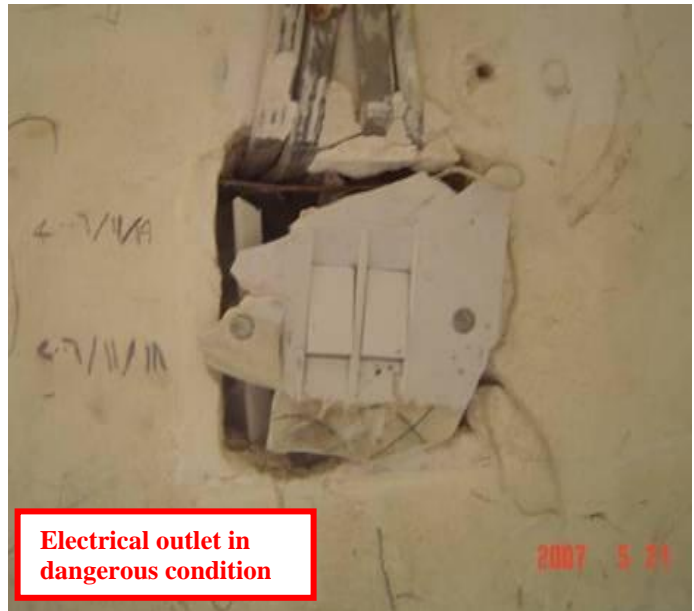
Modification P00001, a no additional cost modification, dated 1 March 2008, consisted of bill of quantities (BOQ) changes, deletions, and additions.

The Notice to Proceed, dated 8 September 2007, required the contractor to begin renovation work within five days and complete the project within 150 calendar days.

Project Objective and Pre-Construction Description

The overall objective of the project was to renovate the Suroor Elementary School. The project was designed to benefit the students and teachers at the school. Specifically, this school renovation project would provide students in the neighborhood a safe and suitable classroom environment.

The school is located in the Husseinia village near Baghdad, Iraq. The school was in a state of major disrepair from years of neglect and failure to maintain adequate upkeep. Site Photos 1 and 2 document the poor condition of the school prior to renovation. The school's electrical system was unsafe, the plumbing system unusable, the restrooms unsanitary, and overall the school was unsafe.



Site Photos 1 and 2. Suroor Elementary School prior to renovation (Courtesy of GRC)

Statement of Work

The Baghdad PRT prepared the Statement of Work (SOW), which required the refurbishment of the school's existing architectural features, plumbing, mechanical and electrical systems. The PRT did not consult with the local USACE GRC resident office or the school when preparing the SOW. USACE GRC representatives made a subsequent visit to the school to identify the specific needs. The school's administration told GRC that work previously identified by the PRT, such as the school's plumbing, was being done under a separate Government of Iraq (GOI) contract. Ultimately, the site visit resulted in six changes to the PRT's original BOQ.

The revised SOW included, but was not limited to, the following:

- survey and design
- architectural renovations, such as inspecting, cleaning, replacing, and regrouting wall tiles and painting interior walls
- electrical renovations, such as replacing faulty 300 amp main electrical panel and furnishing and installing electrical wiring
- constructing a front fence
- install double layer steel doors with hardware and locks
- install front doors for the school
- install a new ceiling fan in each school room
- install blackboards in each classroom

Project Design and Specifications

The SOW required the contractor to survey the existing facility and design the renovations as stated in the BOQ. The design included all items necessary for the demolition, electrical, and architectural work to fully restore the school. The SOW required the contractor, prior to construction, to submit the complete renovation designs in English and Arabic for review and approval by the GRC resident engineer. The SOW also included more specific requirements for guidance in preparing the design and as-built design drawings.

The contractor was required to “provide design and construction using the best blend of cost, construction efficiency, system durability, ease of maintenance and environmental capability.”

In addition, the SOW required that for repair and refurbishment, the standards of the original design would be used. Further, if equipment is to be replaced, the equipment would be replaced with equipment that meets the original design intent of the facility. Where new material or equipment is to be specified they will be specified to Iraqi or equivalent international codes and standards.

USACE GRC representatives provided the designs for the school project to SIGIR, which contained 13 pages of drawings and calculations. Figure 1 is an illustration of the fully renovated school. The design submittals included:

- architectural plans (elevations, sections, & renderings)
- site plans
- electrical (electric, lighting, outlets, and wiring) plans
- electrical calculation sheets



Figure 1. Illustration of the Suroor Elementary School after renovation (Courtesy of GRC)

The architectural plans show the layout of 10 classrooms, 2 staff rooms, and administration areas (Figure 2). While the contractor's submittals included good details of the electrical distribution system, our review concluded that the design submittals did not appear adequate for the renovation project because of the omission of details such as elevations, plumbing, and storm drainage.

GRD disagreed and stated it was "appropriate for the contractor not to include storm drainage details in their submittal" since the SOW did not specifically address storm drainage or civil site work. However, this project included the replacement of colored tiles in the courtyard; therefore, civil site work designs were necessary and drainage for the courtyard needed to be addressed by the contractor in the design submittals.

The SOW required the contractor to provide and certify warranties in the name of the appropriate ministry of all material or equipment, including any mechanical, electrical and/or electronic devices, and all operations for 12-months after final acceptance of the project. In addition, the contractor must provide any other commonly offered extended warranties for material, equipment, and machinery purchased.

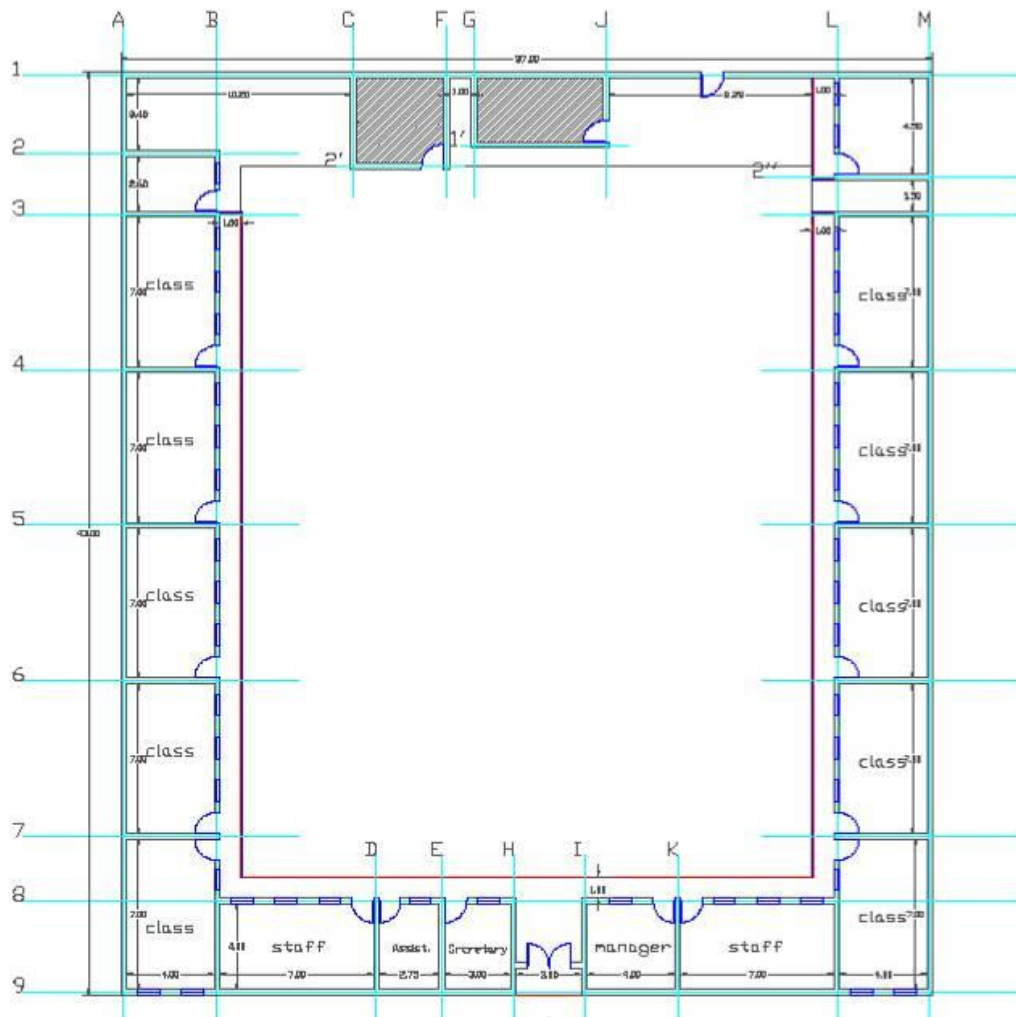


Figure 2. Architectural layout of the school after renovation (Courtesy of GRC)

Site Progress During Construction

Throughout the renovation, the contractor provided numerous project progress reports and photographs. SIGIR reviewed and subsequently relied on selected photographs to document examples of the contractor's construction performance. According to project file documentation, GRC issued the Notice to Proceed on 8 September 2007, and the contractor completed the majority of work by December 2007. A final inspection and acceptance of the school occurred on 21 January 2008 and the project was turned over to the MOE on 6 February 2008.

Site Photos 3 and 4 document the construction of the security wall and guard house wall, respectively.



Site Photos 3 and 4. Construction of the security wall and guard house wall (Courtesy of GRC)

Condition of School at Turnover

The final report was accompanied by four photographs of the facility. The final inspection report consisted of the BOQ and simply marked “Y/N” (yes/no) for each individual item. The final inspection report made no mention of any deficiencies found with the contractor’s work; therefore, the contractor did not have any punch list deficiencies to correct. According to project file documentation, the facility was “turned over to the Iraqi local governance as of 21 January 2008.” While the inspection report does not mention if school children were occupying the school, one final inspection photograph documents students on the school grounds.

A 6 February 2008 USACE Memorandum for Record stated “all work has been inspected, certified, and accepted by the undersigned and is in accordance with the contract requirements.”

Site Assessment

On 10 November 2008, SIGIR performed an on-site assessment at the Suroor Elementary School. Due to security concerns, the time allotted for the site visit was approximately 30 minutes and access to the roof of the school was denied. In addition, several rooms were locked. Consequently, SIGIR performed an expedited assessment of the areas available; therefore, a complete review of all work completed was not possible. The USACE GRC Project Engineer and the school’s “second shift” headmaster accompanied SIGIR during the site visit.

According to the school’s headmaster, the school is a primary school consisting of three separate shifts that use the school throughout the day (first shift from 8 - 11am, second shift from 11am – 2pm, and the third shift from 2pm – 5pm). The school supports approximately 1,500 students.

Architectural renovations

The contract's SOW required the following architectural renovations to the school:

- replace existing walkway tiles with colored, interlocked tiles
- repair and replace windows to insure all broken glass and missing screens are replaced
- paint decorative wall murals

During the site visit, SIGIR identified the new walkway tiles for the school (Site Photo 5). While many windows were replaced, SIGIR noticed at least one instance where a screen was damaged (Site Photo 6); however, it was not clear whether the screen was poorly installed or subsequently damaged. In addition, SIGIR observed painted murals on several school walls (Site Photo 6).



Site Photos 5. New walkway tiles



Site Photo 6. Broken screen and new wall mural

Electrical renovations

The contract's SOW required the contractor to “supply expertise, materials, labor, and equipment necessary to design and construct renovation” to the school.

For the electrical renovations, the contract's SOW required the contractor to supply and replace/install the following:

- existing faulty 300 amp main electrical panel
- electrical wiring
- four (4) evaporative coolers to replace/match existing units
- 40 outlets each connected separately using copper wiring in galvanized pipe conduit

During the site visit, SIGIR identified unsafe electrical wiring and outlets; however, it appeared that someone tampered with the electrical wiring and outlets (Site Photo 7). Also, it did not appear that the contractor corrected existing electrical and plumbing deficiencies addressed under the GOI contract. Further, the wiring and the circuit breaker for the water heater and water pump appeared to be non-functioning, and its electrical wiring was not inside a conduit (Site Photo 8).



Site Photo 7. Unsafe electrical wiring and breaker



Electrical wiring not in conduit

Site Photo 8. Used hot water heater and pump

The BOQ required the contractor to provide and install four evaporative coolers, and according to USACE's final inspection report, all four evaporative coolers were delivered and installed. However, during the site visit, SIGIR only observed one window air conditioning unit (Site Photo 9). After SIGIR briefed GRD that no evaporative coolers were on site, GRD sent representatives to determine the status of the evaporative coolers. GRD subsequently provided SIGIR a photograph of the four evaporative coolers delivered to the Suroor Elementary School (Site Photo 10). In addition, GRD stated that "in October 2008, at the request of a government official, the school principal released three coolers on loan to other schools." This still leaves one evaporative cooler unit unaccounted for; however, at the time of the site visit, SIGIR was unable to inspect several rooms because they were locked and access to the roof was denied. Therefore, SIGIR cannot definitely state whether or not a single evaporative cooler unit was still at the school.



Site Photo 9. The only window air conditioner observed at the school



Site Photo 10. Four evaporative cooler units delivered to school (Courtesy of GRC)

Construction of front fence

The SOW required the construction of a masonry wall with a height of 2.5 meters and a length of 75 meters.

SIGIR observed the interior and exterior of the school's newly constructed masonry security wall. The wall appeared to be adequately constructed, met the requirements for height and length, and provided a form of physical security for the school's students and administrative staff.

Installation of double steel doors and front and back steel doors

The SOW required the installation of double steel doors, complete with hardware and locks, and front doors for the school.

SIGIR observed the double steel doors and front and back steel doors. All doors appeared to be adequately constructed and included the required hardware and locks.

Installation of classroom blackboards

The SOW required the contractor furnish and install "good quality" blackboards for each classroom.

During the site visit, the school's headmaster stated the contractor provided "poor quality" blackboards. Specifically, the blackboards were not properly treated, and as a result, chalk would not adhere well to the blackboards. Consequently, the school's administration decided to use the old blackboards instead (old blackboards were hung over the newly provided blackboards) (Site Photo 11). SIGIR also concluded the newly provided blackboards were of poor quality.

SIGIR advised GRD about the contractor's poor quality blackboards. A GRC representative subsequently visited the school to inquire about the blackboards. According to GRD, the school recently received 12 new whiteboards. The school maintenance staff plans to "put all blackboards in storage and install the new whiteboards in the classrooms because most Iraqi schools are now using whiteboards." GRD did not provide a photograph of the new whiteboards.



Site Photo 11. New blackboard (top) Original blackboard (bottom)

General Observations

During the course of the site visit, SIGIR identified significant areas not addressed by the SOW, which present potential physical and health problems to the school's students and administration.

Overcrowding

According to the school's headmaster, this school is considerably overcrowded, having to distribute approximately 1,500 students between 10 classrooms over the course of three shifts (which averages to approximately 50 students per classroom). SIGIR observed the second shift and identified the school did not have enough desks, which required some students to sit on the floor during classroom instruction (Site Photo 12). The contract's SOW only required the contractor to provide office desks, chairs, and a sofa for the administration room.



Site Photo 12. Overcrowded classroom and lack of desks

Lack of electricity and air conditioning

According to the school's headmaster, the only source of power for the school is the national grid, which does not provide reliable power. For example, the headmaster stated that the school averages approximately five hours of electricity per day (one hour "on" for every four to five hours "off"). The SOW did not require an electric generator.

The missing cooling units that the school principal released to other schools at the request of a GOI official will result in extremely hot conditions during the summer months for the classrooms, contributing to a poor learning environment.

Lack of sanitary conditions

Originally, plumbing work was required by this contract; however, it was deleted once it was determined that a separate GOI funded contractor was to perform the plumbing work. At the time of the site visit, the school's unsanitary conditions presented health and environmental problems to the students and the community. For example, the existing student bathrooms are considerably undersized for a school with a daily capacity of approximately 1500 students (three shifts of approximately 500 students each). In addition, the eastern-style toilets did not have water to flush, which resulted in human waste sitting in the toilets (Site Photo 13). Further, there was no indication that any form of routine maintenance was provided for the bathrooms.



Site Photo 13. Unsanitary condition of school bathrooms

In addition, the sanitary sewer septic system's capacity is not large enough for the school, and according to the headmaster, the septic tank is full because the school does not have a septic cleaning contract. According to the headmaster, a trench was dug to allow discharge out of the full septic tank (Site Photo 14). While this provided an instant relief for the full septic tank, it resulted in large quantities of untreated sewer water being released into the neighboring areas directly bordering the school. As a result, the properties adjacent to the school grounds are unsafe and unsanitary. SIGIR observed

standing water, sewage, and trash surrounding the school. This standing water and sewage can lead to dangerous diseases, such as cholera.

In order to avoid walking through the standing water and sewage from their homes to the school, a make-shift levee was made for the children (Site Photo 15). SIGIR had to use the levee to access this site.



Site Photo 14. Trench dug to allow discharge out of the full septic tank



Site Photo 15. Make-shift levee for students to avoid walking through standing water and sewage

Conclusions

The original objective of this project was to renovate the school in order to benefit the school's students and teachers. This school was in a state of major disrepair from years of neglect and failure to maintain adequate upkeep. The successful completion of this project would provide students in the neighborhood with a safe and suitable classroom environment.

On 21 January 2008, the Suroor Elementary School was accepted by the U.S. government and transferred to the Government of Iraq. On that same day, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) conducted a final inspection of the facility by commenting "Y" (yes) or "N" (no) in a column on the contract's bill of quantities and taking four photographs of the contractor's work. According to the final inspection report, USACE found no deficiencies with the contractor's work. The school was open and operating on that day, which USACE documented in a final inspection photograph.

During the site visit, SIGIR observed the school during the second of three daily shifts of approximately 500 students. According to the school's headmaster, this school educates approximately 1,500 students each day, which requires operating the school facility for three shifts of 500 different students for three hours per day.

The construction appeared to be adequate and to satisfy the contract requirements. The SIGIR site visit identified potential issues with the delivery and installation of evaporative coolers and blackboards; specifically, SIGIR observed none of the four contract-required evaporative coolers and the contractor-provided blackboards were of such poor quality that chalk does not adhere to them and the school refuses to use them. After advising the USACE Gulf Region Division (GRD) of these issues, GRD representatives visited the school to determine the status of the evaporative coolers and blackboards. GRD subsequently provided SIGIR a photograph of the four evaporative coolers delivered to the Suroor Elementary School. In addition, GRD stated that "in October 2008, at the request of a government official, the school principal released three coolers on loan to other schools." This still leaves one evaporative cooler unit unaccounted for; however, at the time of the site visit, SIGIR was unable to inspect several rooms because they were locked and access to the roof was denied. Therefore, SIGIR cannot definitively state whether or not a single evaporative cooler unit was still at the school.

Further, according to GRD, the school recently received 12 new whiteboards. The school maintenance staff plans to "put all blackboards in storage and install the new whiteboards in the classrooms because most Iraqi schools are now using whiteboards."

SIGIR also identified unsafe electrical wiring and outlets; however, it appeared that the electrical wiring and outlets were tampered with subsequent to the work performed by the contractor.

During this project, the Statement of Work was revised due to a school site visit by USACE Gulf Region Central (GRC) to verify existing conditions. One significant revision was the deletion of plumbing work. GRC was informed by school officials that the Government of Iraq awarded a separate contract for plumbing work to a local contractor that was already performing plumbing repairs. Therefore, GRC deleted the plumbing requirements from the contract. The SOW appeared to be adequately developed and detailed to address the needs of the facility with one exception — permanent power. The school is completely dependent upon permanent power from the

national grid to operate the lights, ceiling fans, and air conditioner. Since the power from the national grid is unreliable and susceptible to surges, the need for generator power should be addressed to allow for an environment conducive to education.

Although the contractor's work appeared to be adequate, SIGIR's site visit revealed significant problems caused by overcrowding, a lack of routine maintenance, and poor plumbing repair work. According to the headmaster, approximately 500 students per shift are being taught in 10 classrooms (averaging 50 students per classroom). The contract did not address furniture for the classrooms; therefore, some children had to sit on the floor. The lack of routine maintenance, especially in the bathrooms, was evident during the site visit. In addition, according to the headmaster, no one was responsible for emptying the septic tank; therefore, once it filled to capacity, no additional waste could enter. The capacity of the sanitary sewer septic system is not large enough for the size of the school. A trench was dug to allow discharge out of the full septic tank. Although this provided relief for the full septic tank, the discharge released large quantities of untreated sewage into areas bordering the school. As a result, the properties adjacent to the school grounds are unsafe and unsanitary. SIGIR observed standing water, sewage, and trash surrounding the school. Standing water and sewage can lead to diseases, such as cholera. A make-shift levee was constructed to help school children walk through areas with standing water and sewage.

SIGIR's assessment identified no significant deficiencies with the contractor's work under the revised SOW. The significant problems associated with classroom overcrowding, a lack of routine maintenance, and poor plumbing repair work were not part of the scope of SIGIR's assessment. However, SIGIR would be remiss by not including these critical issues in this assessment. These problems need to be addressed in order to sustain full-capacity operations of this facility over the long term.

Recommendations

The draft report originally contained recommendations to determine the status of the evaporative coolers and quality of the contractor-provided and installed blackboards. Subsequent to the issuance of the draft report, GRD provided additional clarifying documentation, which addressed the previous recommendations. Therefore, this report does not contain any further recommendations for corrective actions.

Management Comments

SIGIR received comments to the draft of this report from the Commanding General, GRD, concurring with the two previous recommendations. GRD representatives visited the school to determine the status of the missing evaporative coolers and the quality of the blackboards provided and installed by the contractor. GRD confirmed that a Government of Iraq representative loaned three evaporative coolers to other schools in October 2008. In addition, 12 new whiteboards were recently delivered to the school to replace the previously installed low-quality blackboards.

Evaluation of Management Comments

SIGIR concurred with the actions taken to resolve the issues of missing evaporative coolers and poor quality blackboards. Consequently, SIGIR eliminated the two previous recommendations.

SIGIR modified the draft report as appropriate to include the additional information and clarifying comments.

Appendix A. Scope and Methodology

SIGIR performed this project assessment from May through February 2009 in accordance with the Quality Standards for Inspections issued by the Council of Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency. The assessment team included two engineer/inspectors and one auditor/inspector.

In performing this Project Assessment SIGIR:

- Reviewed documentation to include the following: bill of quantities, notice to proceed, revised Statement of Work, modifications, and quality assurance/quality control reports;
- Reviewed the design package (plans) and photographs documenting construction progress; and
- Conducted an on-site assessment and documented results at the Suroor Elementary School in the Husseinia village, near Baghdad, Iraq.

Due to security concerns, the time allotted for the site visit was approximately 30 minutes. In addition, SIGIR was denied access to the roof of the school (for security reasons) and several rooms were locked. Consequently, SIGIR performed an expedited assessment of the areas available; therefore, a complete review of all work completed was not possible.

Appendix B. Acronyms

BOQ	Bill of Quantities
ESF	Economic Support Fund
GOI	Government of Iraq
GRC	Gulf Region Central
GRD	Gulf Region Division
MOE	Ministry of Education
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
SIGIR	Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction
SOW	Statement of Work
USACE	United States Army Corps of Engineers

Appendix C. GRD Comments on Draft Report



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
GULF REGION DIVISION
BAGHDAD, IRAQ
APO AE 09348

CEGRD-CG

27 March 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, US Embassy Annex II, Room 1013, APO AE 09316

SUBJECT: SIGIR Draft Project Assessment Report – Renovation of the Al Suroor School, Husseinia, Iraq (PA-08-135)

1. The Gulf Region Division reviewed the subject draft report and agrees with the recommendations. GRD provides additional comments for clarity and accuracy in the enclosure.
2. Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft report and provide our written comments for incorporation in the final report.
3. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Robert Donner at (540) 665-5022 or via email Robert.L.Donner@usace.army.mil.

Encl
as

Michael R. Eyre
MICHAEL R. EYRE
Major General, USA
Commanding

Appendix C. GRD Comments on Draft Report

COMMAND REPLY
to
SIGIR Draft Project Assessment Report –
Renovation of the Al Suroor School, Husseinia, Iraq
SIGIR Report Number PA-08-135
(SIGIR Project PA-08-135)

Recommendations:

SIGIR recommends that the Commanding General, Gulf Region Division:

1. Determine the status of the evaporative air coolers – specifically, whether the contractor delivered and installed the four evaporative air coolers, as required by the contract.

Concur. The contractor provided and installed four evaporative coolers. In October 2008, at the request of a government official, the school principal released three coolers on loan to other schools. An official letter is on file at the school.

2. Require the contractor to provide blackboards suitable for school use (to which chalk will adhere) either by properly treating the ones furnished under the contract or by replacing them with ones to which chalk will adhere.

Concur. A Gulf Region Central (GRC) project engineer visited the school in late March to inquire about the blackboards. The school received 12 new white boards this past week. It plans to put all blackboards in storage and install the new white boards in the classrooms because most Iraqi schools are now using white boards.

GRD provides the following comments for clarity and accuracy.

Overall Comment. The report should be clearer in stating that GRC is required to manage the construction contract in accordance with the Statement of Work (SOW) as prepared by the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). If items are not included in the SOW, such as classroom furniture, maintenance/emptying of the septic tank, installation of a power generator, etc., it is not at GRC's discretion to include these items in their contract. Responsibility for the lack of these items lies with the PRT or the Government of Iraq (GOI), not GRC.

Enclosure

Appendix C. GRD Comments on Draft Report

1. Draft Report, page ii, first paragraph; page 8, first paragraph; page 10, last paragraph; page 13, third paragraph; and page 14, recommendation 1. These paragraphs refer to the installation of four evaporative coolers. The report states "SIGIR found no evidence that any evaporative coolers were delivered or installed." However the report also states, "According to GRC's final inspection report, all four evaporative coolers were delivered and installed; however, a final inspection photograph documented the existence of only one evaporative cooler (Site Photo 10)."

Command Comment. Please revise the information in the referenced paragraphs to reflect the true status of the four evaporative coolers. The GRC contractor delivered four coolers to the school. The contractor installed the coolers. In October 2008, three of the four coolers were loaned to other schools.

2. Draft Report, page 4, first paragraph. "While the contractor's submittals included good details of the electrical distribution system, our review concluded that the design submittals did not appear adequate for the renovation project because of the omission of details such as elevations, plumbing, and storm drainage."

Command Comment. The lack of plumbing details in the design submittals is appropriate since the draft report mentions in the first paragraph on page 3, "The school's administration told GRC that work previously identified by the PRT, such as the school's plumbing, was being done under a separate Government of Iraq (GOI) contract." The list of items addressed in the SOW on page 3 does not mention any requirement for storm drainage or civil site work, so it is also appropriate for the contractor not to include storm drainage details in their submittal.

Appendix D. Report Distribution

Department of State

Secretary of State

Senior Advisor to the Secretary and Coordinator for Iraq

Director of U.S. Foreign Assistance/Administrator, U.S. Agency for
International Development

Director, Office of Iraq Reconstruction

Assistant Secretary for Resource Management/Chief Financial Officer,
Bureau of Resource Management

U.S. Ambassador to Iraq

Director, Iraq Transition Assistance Office

Mission Director-Iraq, U.S. Agency for International Development

Inspector General, Department of State

Department of Defense

Secretary of Defense

Deputy Secretary of Defense

Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller)/Chief Financial Officer

Deputy Chief Financial Officer

Deputy Comptroller (Program/Budget)

Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense-Middle East, Office of Policy/International
Security Affairs

Inspector General, Department of Defense

Director, Defense Contract Audit Agency

Director, Defense Finance and Accounting Service

Director, Defense Contract Management Agency

Department of the Army

Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology

Principal Deputy to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition,
Logistics, and Technology

Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army (Policy and Procurement)

Commanding General, Joint Contracting Command-Iraq/Afghanistan

Assistant Secretary of the Army for Financial Management and Comptroller

Chief of Engineers and Commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Commanding General, Gulf Region Division

Chief Financial Officer, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Auditor General of the Army

U.S. Central Command

Commanding General, Multi-National Force-Iraq

Commanding General, Multi-National Corps-Iraq

Commanding General, Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq

Commander, Joint Area Support Group-Central

Other Federal Government Organizations

Director, Office of Management and Budget
Comptroller General of the United States
Inspector General, Department of the Treasury
Inspector General, Department of Commerce
Inspector General, Department of Health and Human Services
Inspector General, U.S. Agency for International Development
President, Overseas Private Investment Corporation
President, U.S. Institute for Peace

Congressional Committees

U.S. Senate

Senate Committee on Appropriations
Senate Committee on Armed Services
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

U.S. House of Representatives

House Committee on Appropriations
House Committee on Armed Services
House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
House Committee on Foreign Affairs

Appendix E. Project Assessment Team Members

The Office of the Assistant Inspector General for Inspections, Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, prepared this report. The principal staff members who contributed to the report were:

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